

Area West Committee – 18th June 2008

## 8. **Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2009-2014 (Executive Decision)**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To inform members of the draft Management Plan 2009-2014 for the Blackdown Hills AONB. Consultation is currently taking place for a review of the Management Plan.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee approve the draft Management Plan for public consultation.

### **Background**

The Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership was developed in the 1990's and in 2002 the six constituent local authorities (Devon County Council, East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council) joined the Countryside Agency to sign a Memorandum of Agreement and became key funders of the Blackdown Hills Partnership from 2002 to 2008. SSSC funding contribution has been extended to 2011.

### **Management Plan 2009-2014**

Local Authorities have a statutory duty under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act to produce a plan, which sets out the agenda for managing the AONB. The plan should incorporate the views of residents as well as a wide range of public, private and voluntary bodies and provide a focus for bringing organisations together to work in partnership and co-operate across administrative boundaries.

The first and current statutory Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills was adopted and published in April 2004, and runs until 2009. A review of AONB Management Plans takes place every five years and that process is currently underway. The public will be given the opportunity to comment upon the draft Management Plan this summer. As a funding partner of the Blackdown Hills AONB, South Somerset District Council is being asked to approve the draft Management Plan before it goes out to public consultation in a few weeks time.

The draft Management Plan is a very large document of 73 pages, which is summarised below.

The long term vision for the Blackdown Hills is that by 2029 the Blackdown Hills AONB will be 'A living Landscape of Opportunity'. To work towards this vision the second Management Plan is divided into themes, clearly setting out their objectives whilst providing background information along with detail of recent successes, issues and challenges and relevant policies. The responses received through the public consultation will shape the actions that form the Delivery Plan for the period 2009 – 2014. The themes are grouped under three main headings as follows:

- 1) **Landscape as a Resource**, the themes under this heading deal with conserving and enhancing natural beauty.
  - Landscape Character and Historic Environment
  - Environmental Quality and Climate
  - Biodiversity and Geology
  
- 2) **Sustainable Development** – covering the secondary purposes of promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the environment.
  - Farming and land management
  - Access, Recreation and Tourism
  - Planning and Development
  - Transport & Highways
  - Rural Economy and Services
  - Community & Culture
  
- 3) **Communication and Management** – which covers the core functions of AONB management.
  - Communication, Education and Awareness
  - Management and Partnerships

A copy of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2009 – 2014 is available from the Chard Area Office, Holyrood Lace Mill, Chard. Further background information is available at [www.blackdown-hills.net](http://www.blackdown-hills.net).

## Financial Implications

SSDC makes an annual contribution of £11,990 towards the core costs of running the partnership. This is now recognised as a corporate responsibility and provision is built into Area West budgets for the period of the agreement.

## Implications for Corporate Priorities

Working in partnership with the Blackdown Hills AONB addresses the corporate aim to 'Promote a balanced natural and built environment' and in particular corporate objective eighteen:

- 80% of residents and businesses satisfied with the quality of the local natural and built environment by 2012.

**Background Papers:** *Draft Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-2014.*

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